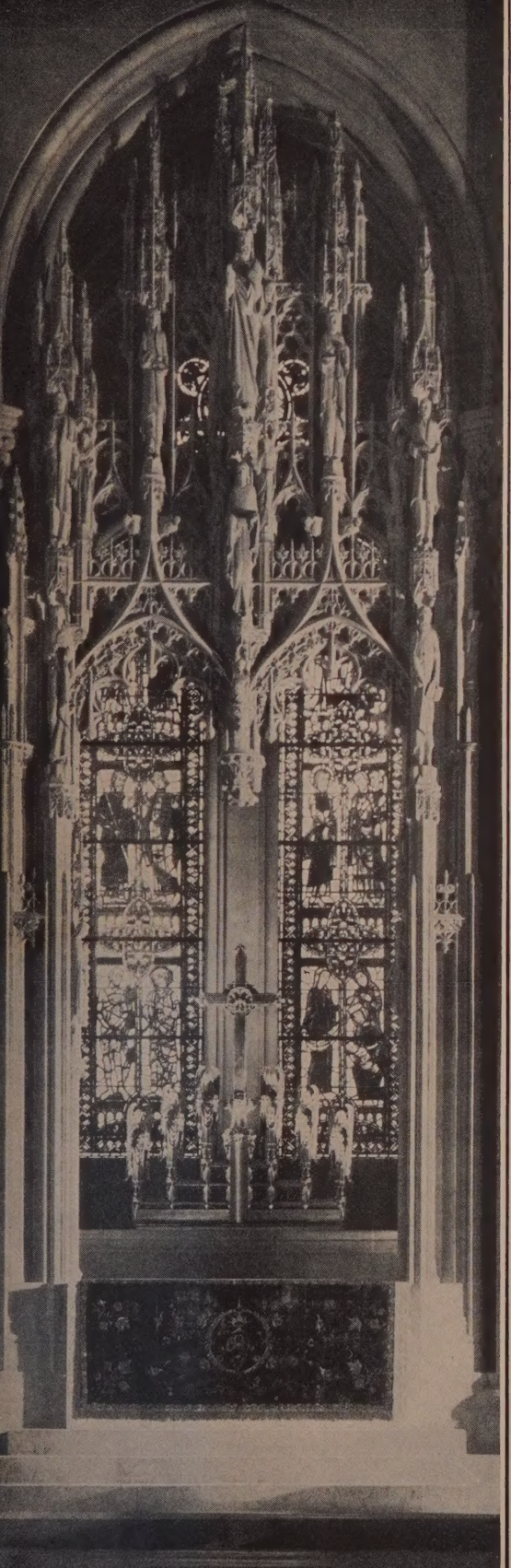

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The Towering Question:
Is Christianity Possible?

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THE CHAPEL DOOR

The Towering Question: Is Christianity Possible?

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

Many people find it difficult to believe in Christianity. They picture Christianity as a creed, a set of settled propositions, concerning which they have to decide whether or not it is credible. When, then, they do not find it credible, they think that ends the matter and say, often wistfully, that they cannot believe in Christianity.

Surely, there is a radical mistake somewhere in that picture of what Christianity is all about. Let us at the start put the case bluntly. Christianity is primarily something to be *done*. It is not first of all a finished set of propositions to be accepted; it is first of all an unfinished task to be completed. It is a way of thinking about life and living life to be wrought out personally and socially on earth. The question to be asked about it is not simply, Is it true? but, Can we ever in this world make it come true? not simply, Is it credible? but, Is it possible?

So blunt a statement of the case may well call out the protest that, after all, Christianity does involve ideas, doctrines, truths, which must be believed if the Christian task is to be Christian. To be sure it does. A full-face photograph and a profile are not contradictory, and because today we are talking about the full-face view of this matter we are not denying the profile. Of course, the Christian task to be done is associated with Christian ideas to be believed. Many people, however, are living spiritually arid and pointless lives because they never have put the Christian task first and then seen the Christian ideas as instruments in its accomplishment.

If any one is fearful that thus we may belittle Christian truth, consider science. Nobody would suspect science of minimizing ideas. Nevertheless, science also is a deed to be done and every idea is an instrument for a task. Could steamships cross the seas? Men theoretically said, No: no ship could carry coal enough to stoke its engines across the Atlantic. That disputed matter never could have been settled in debate alone. The crossing of the ocean by steam was an enterprise not simply to be thought out but to be worked out.

Could men fly? Leonardo da Vinci dreamed it long ago and throughout the succeeding centuries of debate that same thing could have been said which we just have said about Christianity. The question was not simply, Are the ideas of aviation true? but, Can we ever make them come true?

Of course, yellow fever was stopped by a process involving ideas. Nevertheless, there is a man still living in this country, permanently invalided because long ago he deliberately and courageously let himself be bitten by a mosquito to find out what really did cause yellow fever and hence how to stop it. Science is not simply ideas to be accepted but deeds to be done.

If that is true in the realm where pure intelligence is most exalted, how much more in other realms much nearer

Christianity, such as art? Many of us recall the long process of this church's building, the ideas which went into it, the theories and formulas which were involved, and we recall, too, how all this came to point and meaning, was lifted up and made significant because every theory was embodied in a task, every idea was an instrument for getting something done.

In no realm can anybody understand the full meaning of an idea until he sees it as a means of getting something done. Many minds are in confusion because they never have thought of Christianity in those terms. Is Christianity true?—they have debated that without end, but not, Is it something that we can make come true?

We well may start facing this issue by looking at the world about us with its tremendous problems—like war. Do you know the oldest historic monument on earth? Take camels and go out into the Sinaitic Peninsula down the valleys where the Pharaohs' turquoise mines used long ago to be. You will see it carved there yet on the great rock face, the oldest known historic monument on earth. It is a Pharaoh with uplifted weapon about to crush the skull of an Asiatic captive forced to his knees before him. That was thirty-four centuries before Christ; and now, nineteen centuries after Christ, with weapons more terrific than any Pharaoh could have dreamed, we are at it still.

Or consider the tragic human consequences of our economic life, organized around self-interest. Edwin Markham put it in a quatrain:

"Two things," said Kant, "fill me with
breathless awe:
The starry heaven and the moral law."
But I know a thing more awful and obscure—
The long, long patience of the plundered
poor.

See, then, this present world on one side, with its tragic human problems, and, on the other, see Christ and what he stood for—his standards of character, his ideals of brotherhood, his method of love, his belief in the victory of righteousness. What is the towering question rising out of that contrast? Surely, not first of all, Are Christ's ideas theoretically credible? but, Are they in a world like this possible? not simply, Are they true? but, Can we make them come true?

In saying this we are getting back to the first impression which Jesus made upon his hearers. Of all personalities who have swayed the thought of humankind, none could have been less speculative and theoretical than Jesus. Nobody ever met him and went away thinking that he had been faced with a theoretical problem. Moreover, the reason for that is plain: every element in Jesus' teaching is livable. Run through the Sermon on the Mount and note that each element in his teaching can be tried out in life: brotherliness, cherishing no inward hate—that is livable; purity which even in thought respects womanhood—that is livable; sincerity, so that a man's "Yea" needs no oath, his word as good as his bond—that is livable; malice toward none, charity for all, and kindness which unostentatiously helps its fellows, the right hand not knowing what the left hand does—that is livable; inner fellowship with God in the shrine of the spirit, and faith in the victory of righteousness—that is livable. Every emphasis of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount can be tried out in life. No wonder, then, that after finishing it he said, "Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and *doeth* them."

If, then, all Christ's teaching can be lived, every presentation of it was a call, not first for debate but for decision. Will you? he said. Here is a task to be done, a life to be lived, an idea to be worked out. Will you? That is far from the manner of facing Christianity to which many of us have grown accustomed. We older ones, especially, have lived through a generation when one factor after another has pushed into the foreground of attention the speculative, argumentative aspects of Christianity. First, the theory of evolution made many accustomed doctrines obsolete. Then fresh light on the Bible outlawed old beliefs about that. Then the new cosmos broke up the ancient molds in which ideas of God had long been fabricated. Then a fresh vision of the historic Jesus so humanized him as to make ancient dogmatic statements about him seem both untrue and unlovely. The total consequence was to push the argumentative, controversial elements in Christianity into the foreground. We even split into fundamentalists and liberals and, vehemently arguing, hurled back and forth the question, Is it credible? Some of us here were in the thick of that. We are not denying that it was necessary and had its use but, with all the difficulties of this present time, it is healthier to be here.

Look out on this generation. History repeats itself. After an era when the Christian churches have contended in vexed theological argument, so absorbed in intellectual adjustment that often they have forgotten what the intellectual adjustment was about, we are plunged into an era which faces us with a towering task. Can we ever in this world make Christianity come true? Can the principles of Christ and his ways of living life be victorious? Is Christianity possible? On that question hangs everything which matters most in the religious life of our time.

Note again that this way of getting at the matter is not a cheap evasion of intellectual difficulties with belief in order to make Christian faith easier. Some may have said, This preacher is trying to escape the intellectual problems of Christian faith by reducing Christianity to a practical task only. To which I answer, Tell me which is easier, to believe in the credibility of a formal creed or to believe in the possibility of a Christian world? No, when one chooses that latter as the center of the matter he is not dodging difficulties or making faith easier.

Some of us can well remember the halcyon days of mid-Victorian optimism, when calling any one a Cassandra or a Jeremiah was to insult him. Cassandra prophesied the fall of Troy; Jeremiah prophesied the fall of Jerusalem. Who wanted to be called names like that when it was the fashion everywhere to be optimistic? But now we are soberer and remember that both Cassandra and Jeremiah were right. Troy did fall; Jerusalem was destroyed. So in a civilization shaken to its center, with some of the dearest things we ever believed in and worked for, like liberty and democracy, a hissing and byword in nations where they were once enthroned, no one can say we are dodging difficulties when we raise the question, Can we make Christ's way of life come true?

This shift of emphasis is particularly wholesome for us who are modernists. For on one point our critics were right: we were Brahmins, what the world calls "high-brows." We faced Christianity mainly on theoretical levels and made it an affair of the philosophic academy. In consequence, many of our

modernist churches, as any one can see, are spiritually dead and morally futile. For the heart of the common man understands better where the real problem lies. Here is this actual world, blood-drenched, pagan, filled with tragedies so cruel that even in this church they are the hardest things your ministers have to face. Alongside this actual world stands another thing, this strange, unearthly, enchanting thing, this way of living that was Christ's, his dream of a world where peace and brotherhood, integrity and humaneness reign, of which Walt Whitman sang:

> Is it a dream?
> Nay but the lack of it the dream,
> And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,
> And all the world a dream.

The heart of the plain man understands that the central question of Christianity is, Can we ever in such a world make Christ's vision come true?

When we modernists discover *that*, we discover something else in Christianity which commonly we have lost. I mean the Cross. That is where the Cross got into Christianity in the first place, and always will get into it again, not in the acceptance of a theory but in the assumption of a task. My friends, if Christianity is a finished set of propositions to be believed, it is not costly. But if Christianity is an unfinished task to be completed in this terrific world, and if Christian faith is faith that this is the kind of world where that can be done, we are back again at Calvary. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"—that is Jesus, calling not first of all for the acceptance of a theory; first of all for the assumption of a task.

Consider, for another thing, that some of us need this truth more than we need anything else if we are to keep our spiritual life from drying up. We pay our speculative intellect a higher compliment than it deserves when we suppose that the main reason for the loss of Christian faith is argument. Upon the contrary, in any realm if one abstracts an idea from its appropriate task and tries to keep it in isolation as a mere belief, it always dries up. The only way we can keep any idea, Christian or not, real and vital is to do something with it. A generation ago one of the most prominent professors in Yale University lost his religious faith and his description of the process by which he lost it is both accurate and revealing. Said he, "I never consciously gave up a religious belief. It was as if I had put my beliefs into a drawer, and when I opened it there was nothing there at all." Just so! Indeed, inevitably so! Take one look at the life of the Man of Nazareth and see that the last place where it would be possible to keep any real faith concerning him would be in a drawer. When you open it there would be nothing there.

If some one insists that something still is there, let me describe it to you. It is possible for a man to abstract from the Christian faith a selected list of comforting ideas—the fatherliness of God, the inward retreat to his peace, and such like—a very carefully selected list of consoling ideas. These a man puts into a drawer. Once in a while, when he wants comfort, he takes them out and puts them back again. Ask him if he is a Christian and he will say, Yes! Undoubtedly he does possess Christian ideas and beliefs. How many millions like that do you think are in our churches? It is the commonest caricature of Christianity, the reduction of the amazing faith of Jesus in the possi-

bility of a Christian world to a few solacing ideas in a drawer.

I know atheists who are better Christians than that. Oh, much better! As was written of Moses, "When Moses was grown up . . . he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens," so these, my unbelieving friends, have put their lives alongside humankind, hurt by the hurt of others so deeply that they have cried out in agony of soul that no good God would ever suffer this to be. For very pity's sake they have surrendered faith in God and then have gone out to try themselves to be God to men and help the race. They have rejected the Christian theory; they have accepted the task. If I know anything about Jesus he would look on them as long ago he looked upon another, saying, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

Is some one saying, This means that the preacher thinks it makes small difference what a man believes? No, that is not true. But I am sure that what does make a difference was put by Walter Rauschenbusch into a true and ringing phrase: "Wanted: a faith for a task."

Admiral Byrd is starting south again to the Antarctic. Does not such an enterprise demand faith? Indeed it does. Faith in ideas? Yes. Creative faith in the possibility of the enterprise? Yes. Faith for a task! So the undertaking and prosecution of the Christian task demand faith. You cannot do it if you are a cynic. Or if you are a Nietzschean and believe this to be the kind of world where the strong ought to squeeze the weak like grapes into their goblets, you cannot do it. Or if you believe, as Joseph Wood Krutch does, that man has no more significance than the humblest insect that crawls from one annihilation to another, you cannot do it. Or, if you are really atheistic in the sense that you believe in nothing creative here except matter—all man's spiritual life but an accident upon a transient planet —you will cut the nerve of the Christian task at last.

Of course it makes a profound difference what a man believes. As Thomas Huxley said, "the most sacred act of a man's life is to say and to feel, 'I believe . . .'" But do not mix up that high and sacred matter with belief in the accumulated odds and ends of ecclesiastical opinion which never yet made any difference to Christian character or the prosecution of great social causes. Listen to Jesus: "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness." Aye, first the task; then, Wanted: a faith for the task. That makes Christian belief in God, in man, in the Master real.

It does one thing more. It challenges each one of us, if we will have it so, to be in our daily, homely life defenders of the faith. From Henry VIII on, some queer people have been handed that title. I suspect that even now most of us would think that the real defenders of the faith are the men who argue for it, construct speculative reasons in support of it, help others to adjust their minds to the new knowledge of the world so that faith can be with the consent of all their faculties. How important I think that is you know well. But, my friends, the most convincing thing in the world is never an argument. It is always a deed. Men kept on arguing that transatlantic steamships were incredible until a steamship crossed the Atlantic. That proved it possible and, since possible, credible. Men kept on arguing that habitual flying was unbelievable until men like Lindbergh

flew. That proved it possible and, since possible, believable.

Nine times out of ten the real conviction of mankind that anything is credible has come not from an abstract argument, but from deeds which showed it to be possible. If this is so in such realms, of course it is more obviously so in the kingdom of the spirit. James Russell Lowell was right:

> When a deed is done for Freedom, through the broad earth's aching breast
> Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling on from east to west.

If, then, the most convincing persuasiveness in life lies in right deeds, you and I, plain people, are involved. Mark Twain once had a negro servant, named Lewis, who worked around his farm. One day Lewis in an extraordinary exhibition of skill and daring stopped a runaway and saved the lives of three of Mark Twain's family circle. This is what Mark Twain wrote about him: "When Lewis arrived the other evening, after having saved those lives by a feat which I think is the most marvelous I can call to mind, when he arrived hunched up on his manure-wagon and as grotesquely picturesque as usual, everybody wanted to go and see how he looked. They came back and said he was beautiful. It was *so*, too, and yet he would have *photographed* exactly as he would have done any day these past seven years." Always, a right deed is beautiful and convincing.

Consider then. I believe in the possibility of a Christian world, not because I have been argued into it but because I have seen Christian living *done*. I have seen it in persons, firm as steel and beautiful as music, who poured out into this pagan world a Christlike integrity and humaneness which made spiritual life real. I have seen it in homes where what Jesus said ought to be the law of life was the actual principle of fellowship. It was not Christianity argued; it was Christianity achieved. I have seen it in social movements that leaped high barricades, belied the scoffing of cynics and the fears of friends and opened the doors of new eras. It was not Christianity debated; it was Christianity done.

Could there ever have been a generation in history with more need of such defenders of the faith? If to defend Christianity were mainly to argue its credibility, how little most of us could help, but if to defend Christianity is to exhibit its possibility, then every one of us is called for. Victory for decent government in this city would make multitudes believe more in the reality of the spiritual world. The triumph of peace over war, when it comes—as come it will, however long delayed—will lift up innumerable souls into a fresh faith in the reality of the spiritual world. Even when one man stands out like a fine quotation from the Bible in the midst of today's newspaper, to use George Eliot's phrase, he makes it easier for every one who knows him to believe in God. My soul! to use one's daily life as an argument for Christ! Is Christianity true? Millions ask that question and the answer will never be in words. It must be in deeds. We must make Christianity come true!

PRAYER

Our Father, we have been speaking about one who said, Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will. Write those words, we beseech Thee, on our hearts today. Amen.

The foregoing sermon was preached by Dr. Fosdick, October 29, 1933.

Prayer

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

Eternal Spirit, Who hast curiously made us so that we dwell in two worlds, one seen and temporal, the other unseen and eternal, empower our souls that they may not fail in their high enterprise. To this end we, who through another week have been urgently pressed upon by the things of sight, come to Thy sanctuary that we may regain the grace of insight. O Voice inaudible to all but sensitive souls, speak Thou to us. O Light invisible to all but inward eyes, shine Thou upon us. O Power unattainable except by welcoming spirits, flow Thou into us. Send us out from this place convinced that we are not sons of men alone but sons of God.

Glorify us by our worship. Because we look up, may we be lifted up. Make clear to us the invisible world of spiritual values until we shall be sure that nothing else beside is so real. Let not the clouds of the lowlands longer encompass us nor the marshes trap our unwary feet. Give us spiritual altitude. Bathe us in a cleaner moral air. May we be carried out of ourselves by something greater than ourselves.

As thus we pray for our own souls, we remember that no one of us is the whole of himself. Our friends and our families are the rest of us; our nation and our race are the extension of us. For this larger self, which no boundaries can shut in, we pray.

We lift before Thee the sacred interests of our homes and in the silence and secrecy of our hearts one by one we rehearse the names that are dearer than our own lives.

We lift before Thee our nation, grateful for her noble heritage, thankful for pioneers upon whose sacrifices we are pensioners, concerned about these present days, praying for wisdom and courage for the days ahead.

We lift before Thee the Church of Christ, the mother of our souls, from whom the noblest traditions of our lives have come, who, though faulty, has yet been a channel down which the river of Christ's message has flowed into our hearts.

We lift before Thee the whole world of men across all boundaries of race, nation, sect, creed, and class, and here in this sanctuary, dedicated to Christ, we pray Thee for grace to perform an act of all-inclusive love which leaves no one out.

Especially we beseech Thee that on the morrow, when we return to the pressure and preoccupation of our daily life, we may not forget to make real in deed what here we pray for in spirit. Speak Thou to us saying: If any man have this world's goods and beholdeth his brother in need and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

For those deep, intimate, and secret needs that no public voice may speak of we silently pray to Thee. O God, no man may pray for this people; this people must pray for themselves. Therefore do Thou lift up our hearts to the

(*Continued on page 55*)

Singing Towers

The Singing Tower and Chapel of The University of Chicago

By Kamiel Lefévere

"For Bells are the voice of the Church;
They have tones that touch and search
The hearts of young and old. . . ."

It was during his wanderings in search of romance and beauty, through the land of Singing Towers, that Longfellow wrote his beautiful poem "The Belfry of Bruges," which may be a worthy introduction for our series of "Singing Towers."

There, most of the towers, besides their exquisite architectural beauty, also possess their sets of bells, giving them rightly the name of "Singing Towers," and a community was not complete without having such a majestic instrument of bells, called a Carillon, in their church- or city-hall-towers.

This form of music has been called for centuries the greatest musical expression of community life because they sing the time away, expressing the joys and sorrows of the people, living with them from birth to grave, marking the rhythm of time and life in an atmosphere of artistic beauty, and as one mighty prayer for and over the community.

These towers have been symbols of municipal freedom and expression, of artistic greatness, and have represented the idea of civic solidarity. Always a sign of prosperity to the community, they are, with reason, the pride of its people.

They have stood as the "Guardians" to the people, as they called them to the church services or to other religious functions, giving the signal for the merchants to begin selling their wares on the open market places, calling them to arms to defend their homes and community, or for help when there was a fire, or for joy and celebration with fairs and festivals.

The University of Chicago, with its beautiful Chapel and Singing Tower, is one of the latest additions to the number of Singing Towers in America, which will soon take front place among the countries of Carillons, in number as well as in quality. The Chapel is the commanding feature of a great range of buildings, which has no parallel in the academic world. On July 5, 1918, Mr. Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, of New York City, was commissioned to design the Chapel. He did not see it begun as he died in 1924. Ground was broken on August 28, 1925, and the cornerstone laid on June 11, 1926. The completed building was dedicated on October 28, 1928, three years and two months after the breaking of the ground. Its cost was about $1,900,000.

The Chapel is not copied from any Old World masterpiece, but is an original creative work of Gothic architecture. It is a sound piece of genuine masonry construction. Its great length, 265 feet 2 inches, is broken into five bays only, each no less than 39 feet 8 inches wide, a scale equaled only by two or three Gothic buildings in the world. The building is 120 feet 1½

CHICAGO'S CARILLON TOWER

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO CHAPEL WHERE THERE IS A 72-BELL CARILLON

Through the courtesy of Dodd, Mead & Co.

inches in width. The roof line is 102 feet above the grade line. The Tower is 207 feet above the grade line. The foundations go down 80 feet below the floor level, to bed rock.

This Chapel is richly adorned with sculpture, and the great severity of the architecture is relieved, especially on the south front, by a wealth of figures. High up on the tower are demifigures of the Poet, the Thinker, the Merchant, the Craftsman, the Builder, and the Teacher, since the work of all is, in the broad and deep sense, religious. The sixteen shields, four on each face, below the upper belfry, bear the sym-

bols of the Life and Death of Christ, beginning in the middle of the east face with the Annunciation (the lily), and the Nativity (the star). Demi-figures of Faith and Love flank the upper windows. The birds of Wisdom and of Inspiration, the owl and the eagle, appear near the top; the figures in the centers of the parapets are Thomas Aquinas (east), Erasmus (north), Thomas à Kempis (west), and John Bunyan (south), two intellectuals and two mystics. On each side of them, in the topmost angle of the stonework, the arms of Vanderbilt and Tulane look south; those of Colorado and Kansas, west; those of McGill and Toronto, north; and those of Maine and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, east.

The east (tower) door is flanked by demifigures of Bach, symbolizing Music, and Goodhue, symbolizing Architecture. Upon the doors between them is the inscription, "They shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it."

Funds for the structure were provided by Mr. John D. Rockefeller, the founder of the University, and Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. gave to the University a carillon of seventy-two bells in memory of his mother. These bells were installed in the belfry of the Chapel tower in the autumn of 1932 and were first played on the morning of Thanksgiving Day, November 24th, when thousands of people thronged the Midway and the adjacent quadrangles and streets, listening, greatly moved, to their exquisite music, which seemed to float down from the clouds.

A letter sent to the Editor of the *Plain Dealer,* Cleveland, Ohio, and signed S. S. D., may well be taken as a voice of the people, commenting on this musical expression of community life: "Editor *Plain Dealer,*—Sir: On Thanksgiving Day I was compelled to be in Chicago. In a newspaper, I read that a carillon of 72 bells was to be dedicated that day at the University. To kill time, I took the southside Elevated down to the University, fully expecting to discover that the bells were lengths of brass tubing more or less in tune, which a person, by some violent yank of the imagination, is supposed to kid himself into thinking sound like real music. Picture my astonishment at finding great throngs of people assembled at the new Chapel, which is really a young cathedral in size. From the lofty tower came the most exquisite music that human ear could desire to hear on this earth. It was made by real bells, the largest weighing seventeen tons and the smallest as big as a coffee pot. But such music! Think of 50,000 people standing in mute silence, on a chilly day, listening in astonished admiration, not to a lot of hideous jazz, but to the most sublime chords that they ever heard, on bells tuned as perfectly as the finest organ, and played as easily and rapidly as a piano. No words can describe the beauty of carillon music."

This carillon is second only to that given by Mr. Rockefeller to The Riverside Church, which also contains seventy-two bells, but starting with a large bass-bell, called Bourdon, of twenty tons, which makes The Riverside Church Carillon sound a half-tone lower.

The bells of the Chicago University Chapel range in size from 10½ pounds to the great Bourdon which weighs 36,926 pounds, and has a diameter of 117 inches, or almost ten feet.

Five of the larger bells can swing by

motors, as a call to worship; and their weight is: number 72, C sharp, 36,926 pounds; bell number 68, F sharp, 15,736 pounds; bell number 66, G sharp, 10,973 pounds; bell number 64, A sharp, 7,591 pounds; and bell number 61, C sharp, 4,704 pounds.

The total weight of the bells is 220 tons.

The carillonneur plays from a room almost in the center of the entire carillon. This is always the most advantageous position for the clavier, with the shortest possible connections between the clavier and the bells, to eliminate the weight and sluggishness of long wire connections, which are so harmful to light and delicate touch and interpretation.

The location of this Singing Tower has the tremendous advantage of being at a fair distance from the main road of traffic, this being the Midway, and also in having plenty of open space around the tower, where many people can gather and sit down on the large grass lawns, surrounded by beautiful trees and a background of University buildings of great architectural beauty.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The above article from the pen of Kamiel Lefévere is the first of a series of stories about the "Singing Towers" which will appear in THE CHURCH MONTHLY during the coming year. The illustrations to be used have been made available to us through the courtesy of Mr. William Gorham Rice, author of "Carillon Music," and of the publishers, Dodd, Mead & Co. Mr. Lefévere will write of these towers out of his wide experience as a carillonneur which has taken him on various occasions into the towers to play recitals on special days as the guest-artist.)

The Kitchen Cabinet

DURING this past summer a lady of our church, spending her vacation in a region at a considerable distance from New York, had the misfortune suddenly to fall a victim to that ever-lurking nuisance, influenza. Being quite ill and not wishing to be a care to the friend in whose home she was a guest, she called in a trained nurse to attend to her.

After she had done this, she fell to thinking. "Dear me!" she worried. "I hope this will not raise ructions in the kitchen." For she remembered how often the sight of a trained nurse in the culinary regions seemed to do something unaccountable to the genius presiding there, calling forth whatever residuum of original sin still remained in her system. So the lady was apprehensive.

The second day of the nurse's stay, however, all anxiety in that direction was relieved by the nurse's heartfelt exclamation, as she returned from the kitchen, "My, but So and So is nice," mentioning the cook's name. "She's just as obliging and kindly as she can be."

The sick person lay back with a sigh of relief. "I might have known that," she said to herself. "So and So is not an ordinary individual by any means. I've noticed that. She shows in every way that she is a superior type of woman. I remember, too, what my hostess told me about her having held a very responsible position previous to the depression. This rôle of cook is new to her and is one she is assuming only until she can find her way back into her own kind of work again. Thank the Lord she has common sense enough to realize that a trained nurse is not necessarily an ogre!" (*Cont. p. 55*)

CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR BOYS

One hundred and seventy-five boys from different neighborhoods of the city sat down to a Christmas Dinner in the Assembly Hall as guests of the men of the church on December 19th

Then, as the days passed by and the sick lady grew better, she often had opportunity for a few minutes of chat with So and So, for after the nurse's departure, the kindly *pro tem* cook brought up trays and necessary refreshments. And it was discovered that both cook and convalescent came from New York.

One day the subject of unemployment in the great city was mentioned. Both agreed it was heart-breaking. "And so many of the social workers and employment agents are anything but understanding," said So and So, evidently reminiscent of personal experiences. "They forget to be human."

"Well," ejaculated the convalescent with considerable warmth (for she, too, was reminiscing), "I know a couple of employment workers who are not like that!"

The other looked at her rather strangely. "You don't happen to mean Miss Preuss and Mrs. Cowley, do you?" she asked.

"Why, yes!" in astonishment. "Do you know them?"

"Indeed I do!" was the rejoinder. "It was through Miss Preuss I got this summer position here. She has been a real friend to me, helping me to find work until I can get back into my own kind of work again."

Then, of course, there were exclamations and questions on both sides.

"Yes, you're right," continued So and So. "Miss Preuss and Mrs. Cowley certainly *are* different. They are so human and kind."

"Did you know," asked the convalescent, "that they are representatives of The Riverside Church?"

"They *are*?" exclaimed So and So. "I never knew that."

Then the aroused convalescent, pleased as Punch at finding how far Riverside's influence extended, proceeded to explain how the church maintains these two employment specialists in the New York State Employment Service.

The eager listener could not quite recover from her surprise. Though herself a Roman Catholic she kept saying over and over again, "I just can't get over that. To think Riverside Church employs those two fine women. And they have been so kind to me. Miss Preuss has been a real friend." And her face lighted up at the thought of that friendship.

And now, by the way, let the editor remind you that Miss Preuss or Mrs. Cowley can be reached by calling Lexington 2-0900. They are ready and equipped to put an understanding person in the job you need to have filled. Give them a chance. You'll be surprised!

PRAYER

(*Continued from page 49*)

source of grace and power and grant help for sorrows that need comforting, weakness that needs strengthening, sins that need forgiving, temptations that need overcoming, anxieties that need assuaging, and so steady and empower us that we who entered this sanctuary insecure and fearful may go out uplifted and inspired.

We ask it in the spirit of Christ.

Amen.

▽ ▽ ▽

WOMEN FROM FIFTEEN DIFFERENT LANGUAGE GROUPS GATHERED AS OUR GUESTS IN THE ASSEMBLY HALL ON MONDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 18TH

Flags, Folks, and Fellowship

By Grace H. Patton

It is seldom that the capacious Assembly Hall at Riverside Church takes on an air of such unabashed gayety and colorfulness as it did on a certain night shortly before Christmas when it decked itself in gala attire to extend hospitality to a large gathering of women belonging to many racial groups coming from widely-scattered sections of New York City and vicinity. Flags of many countries waved in welcome overhead, while evergreen festooned on the walls left no doubt in the mind of anyone as to what season of the year was being celebrated. A tall, commanding Christmas tree held out its bespangled branches like friendly arms toward the many guests it saw assembled. This was especially appreciated by the sprinkling of children who—although this was primarily a woman's party—had managed to include themselves in the invitation and who, when the program was ended, greatly enjoyed the long stretch of slippery floor on which they might slide, and the eating of cake unto the second and third gustation. Here and there an occasional man sat partly hidden by his "women folks," but, by and large, this was a woman's affair, given by women of Riverside Church (specifically those of the Women's Bible Class) for women of various racial groups. Quite a number of the guests of the evening had attired themselves in the brilliant plumage of their own special group, and this added an element of gayety and festiveness to the occasion.

It hardly seemed possible that a whole year had elapsed since these same groups had foregathered in the same room, around a similar Christmas tree, in similar holiday spirits and attire. Probably the success of the first venture had been the cause of the second; for the different racial groups had not only met and enjoyed each other at the year-ago Christmas gathering, but had, during the intervening year, made efforts to carry out the same kind of comingling—Hungarians, Poles and Italians meeting with Porto Ricans, Spanish and Bohemians—in a way similar to that in which Riverside Church had done it. So this second Christmas saw the different groups together again with another opportunity for further acquaintance and friendship. The various groups represented supplied the evening's program of music and singing, while the women of the church acted as hostesses, trying to make all groups feel at home and have the chance to know each other.

There exists, you see, a "Women's Friendly Group," which started about eleven years ago, sponsored by the Baptist City Mission Society and having as its aim the bringing together, largely through the mother's clubs and other women's organizations in many foreign-speaking churches, these women who need—even as we all do—the broadening effect of inter-racial contacts. They get together four times a year for social gatherings where they have entertainments, discuss problems and try to learn more about each other.

An average attendance of between one hundred and fifty and two hundred women is usually seen at these meetings, but the one at Riverside brought out about three hundred. This enterprising "Women's Friendly Group" is at present sending five foreign pastors' wives to the course in child study conducted by the Federation of Churches. These wives will in turn pass on their findings to the groups that have sent them. In this way, co-operative effort is not only bringing understanding between the different nationals, but shared benefits.

So, as the gay Assembly Hall saw its holiday guests departing at a late hour for distant parts of the city—(and that with the cheerful spirit of a kerchiefed group of elderly Italian women who, though they had far to go, protested in broken English, "Oh, no! Not far. Never mind. Not too far!")—it realized that the time of fellowship spent within its walls would be carried on by smaller groups throughout the year; and it is hoped that another Christmas might bring together again this aggregation of women, speaking various languages, reared in widely different customs, yet—in all that matters most,—just women, women called together by the remembered advent of a little Baby, born of woman.

JOINING THE CHURCH

Last month we had something to say in the "Latchstring" about the "church within the church," meaning by that phrase the group of people who get the most out of the church for the very good reason that they put the most into it. Now we don't make a practice of "asking people to join" The Riverside Church but we do very shamelessly ask you to join the "church within the church." And how is that done? Well, there is no rite or ceremony, no single sign or symbol, no outward mark at all. It is a company of which one becomes a member almost surreptitiously. Many who belong do not know it themselves. They don't even suspect it. They know others whom they think of as "among the elect" and they would not be surprised or envious over any recognition that might come to them.

Well, that is almost the answer. The church within the church is they who have the church where the Kingdom of God is, and always must be, "within them." They do not seek the chief seats in the synagogue, and they don't get them. But they do get something of infinitely more value in the end, something that comes only to the back seats. It is an invitation in a still, small, and understanding voice,—"Come up higher."

AN APPEAL TO THE "400"

There are approximately 400 members of The Riverside Church who take no share in the support of our work nor do they appear among those who have notified us that in these difficult times they are unable to contribute though we can count upon their interest and disposition in the matter.

There is a discrepancy between our current income and our current expense. There is a similar discrepancy between our budget for benevolences and the sums which are coming to us for these projects.

We submit that these potential deficits belong to the "400" who are not at present contributing. In fairness to the 1400 or more who are giving regularly and liberally, we urge the "400" to take on some share of responsibility.

The Riverside Church

490 Riverside Drive Telephone MOnument 2-2900

For general information inquire of the telephone operator.

For information concerning

Membership, ask for an appointment to see one of the ministers.

Weddings, funerals, or other pastoral matters, address one of the ministers or their assistants.

Church School educational classes, parents' groups, or the recreational facilities of the church, see Mr. Hellstrom (Thursday, 10:00-12:00 A.M.).

Women's Activities:

For the Woman's Society, see Mrs. Howard (Tuesday and Friday, 10:00-12:00 A.M.).

For the Women's Bible Class, see Mrs. Eddy (Monday and Thursday, 10:00-12:00 A.M.).

For the Business and Professional Women's Club, see Miss Vance (Wednesday, 10:00-12:00 A.M.).

Men's Activities: Address Dr. Carder, meet him at one of his regular office hours (Tuesday 10:00-12:00 A.M. and 7:30-8:30 P.M. and Wednesday 4:00-5:00 P.M.) or at your convenience as may be arranged with his secretary.

Young People's Work (The Riverside Guild) communicate with Mr. Hellstrom or Mrs. Howard.

Relief, social service, see Miss Downs (2:00-5:00 P.M. Monday to Friday).

Special services, church finances, and sittings consult Mr. Heidt (Wednesday and Saturday, 10:00-12:00 A.M.).

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The office hours for staff members indicated above are published for the information of members of the congregation and the public who may find these regular appointments convenient. The ministers and members of the staff will be happy to arrange by mail or telephone for interviews at other times as may be desired. The schedules of the ministers and members of the staff are so arranged that one or another of them can be reached at the church any day between 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M.

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"THINK THIS OVER"

"Nothing ever gets anywhere unless it starts, and several of our Guild services have decidedly 'failed to arrive' becau e they never get started. We refer to the buzz of conversation which sometimes persists throughout the musical introduction and the opening hymn. The music at the beginning of the service is not designed to cover up the noise of the people entering the room. On the contrary, it is planned as an integral part of the service, and it is not only thoughtless but exceedingly discourteous to Bess Hagmeier and those who assist her, when people disregard this part of the service. We feel sure that Guild people will find more in the service if they start looking for it as soon as the service begins."

The above paragraph appeared in a recent issue of *Horizons*, a publication sponsored by our young people's organization, The Riverside Guild. Of course we wouldn't be disposed to talk so directly about our Sunday morning congregation and its attitude toward worship as these young people do about their service. But if the testimony of some members of our church as to what goes on around them on Sunday mornings during the organ prelude in the way of whispered conversations, *sotto voce* greetings to members and friends, and other distracting "public speaking," is to be taken at its face value, we have many people in the Sunday morning congregation who fail to co-operate in creating a spirit of quietness and worship. We would emphasize the sentence which appears regularly in the Church Calendar, "Worshippers in their seats at this hour are asked to observe silence during the Organ Prelude."

BOOK AND PAMPHLET SERVICE

OF

The Church Monthly

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Books by Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick on a great variety of subjects are listed below. Any book will be sent postpaid by The Church Monthly on the receipt of the list price.

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The Handbook of the Riverside Church, $1.00, plus 15c if you ask to have it mailed. (It tells of the background and program of the church, and the symbolism and architecture of the building. It is a book of 127 pages and 59 illustrations.)

Please send your orders to The Church Monthly, 490 Riverside Drive, New York City